

# connections

Growing congregations that passionately engage their community to make disciples.

## Church Officer Enrichment Event aims to equip, inspire and connect church leaders



Trying to get all hands on deck and rowing in the same direction? Help is available that won't negatively impact your budget! On Saturday, January 25, the Presbytery's Congregational Resourcing Team presents Church Officer Enrichment: Navigating the Waters at Northwoods PC, Houston. The event is designed for officers who are brand new or have years of experience. Load up your carpools of church leaders for a day of inspiration, information, insight, and fellowship!

The Keynote Speaker, Jack Haberer, is editor of Presbyterian Outlook and the author of *GodViews: The Convictions That Drive Us and Divide Us*. Jack will start the morning by presenting

So What About Those Sharks? and offering sage wisdom on how leaders can best deal with conflicts that inevitably emerge within congregations and denominations.

Following the keynote, participants can choose from an array of workshops. Workshops addressing the holy trinity of *Bible*, *Book of Order* and *Book of Confessions* will be offered twice. Other workshops deal with more specialized topics including vision casting, building better teams, congregational strength and health indicators, developing emergency plans, and making hospital calls.

Specialized workshops will be available for Clerks and Treasurers – also a workshop on Clergy Ethics. Less participants feel exhausted by their responsibilities, "Finding the

Still Waters" will remind leaders to prioritize spiritual practices in the midst of committee dominated schedules.

Congregational Ministries Publishing (The Curriculum Publishing House of the PCUSA) will provide a bookstore which will carry a variety of resources specially recommended for the event, many of them offered at deep discounts. The selection will include books, curriculum, studies and *Books of Order* and *Confession*. Folks eager to shop may also visit the Northwoods SERRV gift shop, which will be open during the event, for items handcrafted around the world.

Participants may purchase a lunch ticket for \$10 or are welcome to brown bag their meal. Help leaders make accurate class counts and catering counts by pre-registering no later than Friday, January 17. Child care is available with pre-registration at no cost. This is a free event.

Online registration at <http://www.eventbrite.com/e/church-officer-enrichment-registration-8786926935>

Brochure at [http://www.pbbyofnewcovenant.org/files/forms/2014\\_Church\\_Officer\\_Enrichment.pdf](http://www.pbbyofnewcovenant.org/files/forms/2014_Church_Officer_Enrichment.pdf)

For more information, contact Carrie, [cwalker@pbbyofnewcovenant.org](mailto:cwalker@pbbyofnewcovenant.org).

## Good news sightings: Committee on Ministry launches Treasure Hunters Initiative

The Committee on Ministry (COM) wants to know our churches better. How can we be a truly connectional church if we don't know one another? The Treasure Hunters Initiative grows out of a belief that while Triennial Visits are no longer required by our Form of Government, contact and conversation are essential to maintaining connection and community.



Taking seriously Christ's admonition - For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also - the Treasure Hunter's initiative seeks to give visible form to COM's care for the congregations and minister members of the presbytery. The goal is to learn more about and celebrate the ministry and mission of our churches and to better know what their particular needs might be.

Because our smaller membership churches are often unsung heroes, dismissing their

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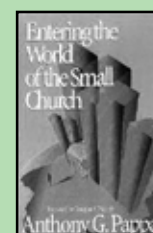
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## NEW COVENANT CONNECTIONS

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## From the Cole Mine

By Rev. Mike Cole  
General Presbyter,  
Presbytery of New Covenant

### “Ups and Downs”

I was in an airplane on Saturday, November 2, when the thought struck me: “I think I’ll trim those tall shrubs in front of the house to get ready for hanging Christmas lights in a month.” It sounded like a reasonable idea. The weather was pleasant and sunny and I was getting home from the Synod meeting in the early afternoon – plenty of time to do a bit of yard work.

I’ve babied these particular plants since we got the house and have shaped them into twelve foot high shrubs with three round clumps of leaves on each. It’s kind of a nice touch, if I do say so myself. I finished trimming one and then moved to the second one on the other side of our front sidewalk. I climbed up to about the sixth step on the ladder and was clipping away when I reached just a tiny bit further to get one more branch before climbing down to move the ladder.

That’s when the ladder started to tilt toward the sidewalk. It kept leaning, further and further, until there was no mistaking that I was either going to hit the sidewalk or fall off the other way. I chose to jump off in the opposite direction (at my age and weight, “jump” is an exaggeration – it’s more like a lunge) and landed on my backside, straddled across the ladder. I remember that my head hit the ground and bounced (it’s funny what you notice in a split-second) and that my right leg was in tremendous pain. I was sure I had broken a leg or hip or both and I wasn’t sure about my head at all.

Fortunately, it was such a nice day that Ellie had the windows open and she heard my “thud” and whatever I said when I was falling (thankfully, I don’t remember what I said, but I’m sure it was genteel!) It turned out

that the pain in my leg was a cramp and that I could move all body parts. Eventually, I got up and managed to walk around enough to satisfy myself (not Ellie, so much) that I was functioning properly.

This is the part of the story where one would expect that I would next recount my visit to the emergency room. However, I am nothing if not stubborn when it comes to medical treatment for myself. I reasoned that I had to preach the next day and I wasn’t going to spend hours in an emergency room and lose sermon preparation time when I was feeling okay. So, I cleaned up, ate dinner, finished my sermon preparation, read a bit, and went to bed.

The next morning was excruciating! I was sore all over and certain that skipping the emergency room was a terrible idea after all. But I persevered, preached an early worship service, and went straight to the emergency room. When I described my accident, they took me straight away to an examination room and put a collar on my neck. But when the nurse asked me when this happened, assuming it had just happened that morning, and I told her that it had happened 18 hours earlier, she just stood there and stared at me. I suspect she was waiting for me to say, “No, no, I’m just kidding! No one would be so stupid as to wait 18 hours after a bad fall before going to the emergency room.” But when I didn’t deny what I had just told her, she gave me her best nurse look and a lot of tsking as she went to find a doctor. Fortunately, she didn’t bring a psychiatrist!

The happy ending to this story is that nothing was broken or concussed. The really happy ending is that after five days of feeling totally rotten, I experienced a complete

overnight healing, unlike anything I have experienced before. Now, two months later, I am still without any significant pain from my accident, praise the Lord!

So, what’s the moral of this story besides reinforcing the notion that the Lord watches over fools as much as wise people? The next time a pastor or session tells me they would’ve asked for help sooner but they thought they could take care of the situation themselves, I will do my best not to give them the “nurse look” and “tsk.”

When you, your session or congregation need help, don’t wait as I did before asking for assistance. Your presbytery staff and leadership are here to serve you. That’s one of the best things about being in this presbytery – we don’t have to go it alone.

In Christ,





# Treasure Hunters

Good News from page 1

potential impact because “We are just a small church,” Treasure Hunters will begin by making a commitment to visit every church reporting 100 members or fewer during the first six months of the year. As these initial visits are completed, Treasure Hunters will widen their search among larger congregations.

What will happen at these visits? Mostly listening and prayer. The volunteers making these visits aren’t an investigative team. They are conversation partners and cheerleaders. They’ll ask three questions:

- How has this church blessed you?
- How is this church blessing the community?
- What else would you like to tell/ask us?

And then they will pray – for the church and its community,

seeking God’s blessings and celebrating ministry.

Reporting out of those meetings will be simple summaries – but the life of the congregation will be seen through fresh eyes. Treasure Hunters will share with our presbytery publications some of the good news sightings in our churches. Maybe we will even be able to celebrate some of those shining examples of Christ’s light and love during our presbytery meetings.

So... If you are part of a small membership church, be open to a visit and welcome your treasure hunter. If you would like to help with the Treasure Hunter Initiative by serving on a visiting team or writing highlights of those visits for publication, we’d love to hear from you. Contact Sharon Darden or Mary Marcotte to learn more.

## What makes a church financially healthy?



Here’s help in evaluating your church’s stewardship! Find out in about ten minutes where you are going tomorrow, by learning where you are today. What makes a church financially healthy? It’s not the amount of money in the offering plate each week or the number of fundraisers held each year. It’s a variety of factors that differs from church to church — and

your personalized Financial Health Assessment shows you which are the right ones to improve your church’s stewardship, based on your unique circumstances.

A free and simple online tool, the Financial Health Assessment, <http://assessment.presbyterianfoundation.org/> analyzes your stewardship culture and produces an instant report of your church’s giving health. Clear and honest, the report reveals gaps in your fundraising program and even provides guidelines to help make your church’s giving impact even greater.

Get this free Financial Health Assessment provided by the Presbyterian Foundation

## Thank you!

The Presbytery staff would like to thank those who brought joy and laughter to the Presbytery Christmas Open House. Everyone enjoyed feasting on the delicious food and desserts for this annual celebration! The staff is especially grateful to the folks who stayed to help with the clean up.



## Clerk’s Corner

By Rev. Lynn Hargrove  
Stated Clerk,  
Presbytery of New Covenant

## Yearning for connection

I’ve been church homeless for this past year, having serving St. Giles PC, Houston, before it dissolved. It is an uncomfortable place in many ways and somewhat freeing in others. During this time I have had the privilege of visiting different congregations near where I live – ChristChurch, Bellaire; St. Paul, St. Andrew’s, and St. Luke’s in Houston – and some that are far away like Covenant, College Station. I have preached and assisted in worship at Westminster, Webster, St. Paul’s in Needville, Pathways, and ChristChurch. I have been welcomed wherever I have gone and have been inspired in different ways.

Going into an unfamiliar church is hard, and I understand a little bit more how people can feel intimidated. As a pastor, I know what to do ... when to stand up, when to sit down, when to speak, and when to be quiet. I am usually familiar with the music and the prayers. I try to sit in the middle of the pew, figuring that way I am not in someone’s seat.

I wonder about those who might be coming into the church for the first time. How do we teach worship? How do we help them to feel comfortable in what can be an intimidating situation? Visiting a church is hard.

Part of my discomfort comes from my “home church” being in the discernment process as they ponder continuing in the denomination. I know that there are places there that I can go and be welcomed – the Sunday School class that I used to teach, fellowship dinners, a women’s small group. And as familiar as it feels, it is difficult for me to be there knowing that there is this current of dissatisfaction with what I hold dear. I feel as though I am being punished for wanting to stay in the PC(USA) and for supporting its ministry in the world.

One of the hardest parts for me is that it is getting easier not to go to church on Sunday morning. Without the obligation, I feel free to sleep in or to do other things. Yet I find myself feeling adrift, like something is missing. I long for being connected to a community of faith in a meaningful way... a place where I am challenged to grow and to serve. And I know that I will find that place again. It may be back in my “home church” once the vote has been taken, or it may be somewhere different.

As much as this is difficult for me, I know it is worse for my friends and family who have a lot more invested than I do. So, I ask you to pray for congregations in the discernment process, for the church members who are feeling like their home is being taken away from them when they have done nothing wrong. Pray for our denomination in the months ahead. We will meet in General Assembly in June to tackle some major social and theological issues. Pray for the congregations in our presbytery, and for our staff.

We live in anxious times, and many expect the church to be that sanctuary from the troubles of life, not a place that produces more anxiety and upset. May we in the church be a people of peace and comfort for those who are experiencing tumult. May we be welcoming and hospitable, especially to those whom we do not recognize. May we be ever mindful of the needs of others as we open our hearts to love and be loved. May it be so!



## Mary's Musings

By Mary Marcotte  
Associate General Presbyter,  
Presbytery of New Covenant

### And how are the children?

I've read that this is a traditional greeting among the Masai people. The meaning within that culture is more than a polite question about the kids. It is a question about the health of your tribe. The traditional response is, *All the children are well*. It conveys an understanding that peace and safety prevail and that protection and nurture of the young and powerless are a key priority.

I have worked with several congregations lately that are worried about the children - as in the absence of children. One elder put it succinctly, "We notice the lack of children, because that is pretty obvious. The truth of the matter is that we are also missing the generation of adults who would be the parents of those children."

For a very long time we used to be able to count on "our" kids returning after a hiatus of participation in their college and young adult years. I confess my own church attendance was pretty irregular in those early years of marriage and career. Church folks say "Oh, they'll come back when they have children." I certainly did. But increasingly the young adults are not coming back.

Some aren't coming back because our society is more mobile and they may be living across the country or even halfway around the world. Some of those transplants seek out and find a new church family, but unfortunately many more got so out of the habit of church that they have come to believe that having an ongoing community of faith is irrelevant to their lives. Others seek to replicate the experience of the church of their childhood for their own children, but find that they themselves are not connecting with that new church community. Sometimes that difficulty is rooted in those young adults having been taught to love a particular church more than they learned how to follow Jesus. Sometimes those who had been raised up to love Jesus have a tough time finding a church that loves Jesus, welcomes the newcomer, and continues to challenge and equip God's people to wrestle with their faith and live out their discipleship 24/7.

So how *are* the children? And who are the children? As my 90-year-old mother reminds me, I'm still her little girl. So "the children" just may be the charming toddler, the inquisitive teen, the struggling newlywed, the harried dad, the empty nest duo, the expectant grandparent, or even the increasingly frail and fragile nonagenarian. After all, in baptism we are each proclaimed 'child of God.' How are we paying attention to nurturing the multi-generation mix of our congregations? How are we intentionally living together in community rather than simply sharing space?

As we begin the new year, I'd encourage each of you to reflect on that simple question: *How is it with the children?* Follow up that initial query with others: Who are the "children" in our church family who need a bit more attention? Who are the "children" beyond our doors who are falling through the cracks of our inattention? How can we be a place of welcome, nurture, challenge, and belonging to a new generation of our church family - whatever age or stage of life?

I pray for a season of church life when we can answer "all the children are well." May we be ready to welcome the new children, know them and love them, expanding our circle of God's love.

# Community News

## Houston Single Parent Residential Program: construction update



Construction of four residences well underway.

By Rev. Peter D. Crouch, PCHAS Vice President for Development

It's an exciting time at the site of Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services' Single Parent Residential program on the campus of St. John's Presbyterian Church in Houston. Construction is moving right along and each day we get closer to our goal: giving struggling mothers a chance to raise their children in a safe, nurturing environment.

Many of us see a homeless person - alone - on the street and it's heartbreaking. Most people don't realize that single mothers with children comprise the largest homeless population. They are struggling to build lives for themselves while caring for their children.

That's why Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services (PCHAS) created its Single Parent Residential program. The program helps single mothers who are facing homelessness due to poverty, abuse, divorce, abandonment, violence or other crises. We give these women a chance to become strong and self-sufficient without constantly fearing for their and their children's survival and safety.

We have two other Single Parent Residential programs in Texas as well - in Weatherford and Waxahachie. Over the years, we've helped more than 50 single moms

gain their independence.

A "graduate" of one of our programs had this to say about her experience with PCHAS:

*"I held a position with a daycare, but the wages were too low for me to be able to provide for myself and my two children. I didn't have savings to fall back on. That's when someone told me about Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services and their Single Parent Residential program. I can honestly say if it weren't for this program, my children and I would probably be living in my car or worse. If I hadn't been rescued, I would have lost my job and perhaps my beautiful son and daughter, too. Through this program, my family was provided with a safe place to live, and PCHAS treated me with dignity."*

(You are invited to read the full testimonial on our website: <http://texas.pchas.org/single-parent-residential-program>).

PCHAS' Single Parent Residential program would not exist without your prayers and financial support. For more information about this project, please contact me or Jana Hobbs, PCHAS Senior Development Officer in Houston. You can reach me at [peter.crouch@pchas.org](mailto:peter.crouch@pchas.org). Jana can be reached at [jana.hobbs@pchas.org](mailto:jana.hobbs@pchas.org)



# Highlights

## Taizé gathering in Houston this spring! PILGRIMAGE OF TRUST comes to Houston

Plan now to spend a Pilgrimage of Trust Weekend in Houston with young adults between the ages of 18 and 35 from all over North America. The Taizé Gathering begins with evening prayer on Friday, April 25, (plan to arrive between 2:00 and 6:00 p.m.) and ends midday on Sunday, April 27, with worship in different churches.

The first prayer service will take place Friday at 8:00 p.m. and is open to all ages. Saturday will be a full day, very much in the style of Taizé with three prayer times, reflection on themes from Scripture, sharing in small groups, and meals together.

Workshops will be offered Saturday afternoon - some on spiritual and biblical themes, others on signs of hope in places of suffering,

and still others based on art and music. Participants will be asked to share in the costs of the gathering – between \$35 and \$50, with the possibility of benefitting from a “solidarity fund” for those unable to afford the full cost. It will also be possible to contribute to the solidarity fund to help others make it to Texas. A link for registration will be posted on the Taizé website: [www.taize.fr/Texas](http://www.taize.fr/Texas) in January.

To better understand Taizé, watch the excellent introductory video at <http://vimeo.com/76217817>!

Register by April 4. Watch the Taizé website for more details.



## Have you seen New Covenant's new website?

The presbytery has a new website – same address, but totally new! It's a cleaner, more accessible, friendlier version that we hope will be far more useful to all our members and friends. <http://www.pbymofnewcovenant.org>

A few things you should know about our new website:

- The main navigation tabs are along the top of the homepage. Explore these tabs and get familiar with how the content is organized
- Using “Search” is a great way to find something specific - even just word.
- Early reports say that users may need to clear their cache in order to access the new site. Simply google “clear cache” to find easy instructions for your browser.

- Want to read *Connections* or manage your subscription to *Tuesday Connect*? See the box, Stay Connected, at the bottom of the homepage.

Additions and corrections are ongoing! We ask for your patience as we continue to make our site user-friendly, complete, and correct! We want you to tell us what doesn't work or what is missing! Contact Webmaster Scott Young, [ibringit@gmail.com](mailto:ibringit@gmail.com), and Editor Helen Wolf, [hwolf@pbymofnewcovenant.org](mailto:hwolf@pbymofnewcovenant.org).



## Making History Today

By Rev. Dr. James S. Currie  
Executive Secretary,  
Presbyterian Historical Society of the Southwest

## “A Love for the Church”

Yesterday afternoon (December 3) I attended the memorial service for the Rev. Dr. John (Jack) William Lancaster at First Presbyterian Church in Houston. After graduating from Austin College and Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia, and then earning an additional Master's degree from Austin Seminary, Dr. Lancaster served three congregations in his ministry – First Presbyterian in Bay City, First Southern (now Central) Presbyterian in Austin, and First Presbyterian in Houston.

The prelude to the memorial service consisted of a medley of great hymns of the church. As I sat in the sanctuary where I had been a member as a teenager for four years, I thought about Dr. Lancaster and other ministers who had served that church and with whom I had been acquainted: Dr. Charles L. King, Rev. John S. Land, Rev. Thomas Talbot, Rev. Otis Moore. There were others, but they were ones whom I had had the honor of meeting and knowing.

At the risk of sounding overly sentimental or desiring to whitewash history, I thought of the love those ministers had for the church. There were social issues in those days that affected the church as an institution, not the least of which were the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War. Nevertheless, there was a sense not only of the church's importance, but that the gospel the church proclaimed and tried to live had something important to say to the world, that the church was an earthen vessel that had been entrusted with a treasure that could speak to all persons and all situations. In my mind, at least, there was never any talk of giving up on the church or that the church and the gospel were somehow irrelevant or that leaving the church was ever a good thing.

Signs of change within the church began to emerge in the 1960s (e.g., the ordination of women to church office and the departure of many persons for the newly-formed Presbyterian Church in America), but the Presbyterian Church was still considered strong, both in numbers and in conviction.

The gospel found different expressions in those days -- such as Episcopal priest Malcolm Boyd's *Are You Running with Me, Jesus?* and the translation of the Bible into more contemporary language (Good News for Modern Man and J. B. Phillips' translation), but those were seen as signs of strength; indeed, new expressions of the gospel continue to abound.

As we make history today, we do well to look to and learn from those who have gone before us and be grateful for their ministry. The church is not in the business of preserving its own life, but rather of giving its life in service to others. Pope Francis gets it right when he says that the church needs to get its hands dirty and bruised rather than trying to preserve its own survival. Jesus said it best: “For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my

## Hand in Hand

One hundred youth and adults from thirteen churches of our presbytery joined hands in mission November 16 at Target Hunger. These volunteers sorted and stocked donated food items as well as cleaned and organized the warehouse. Youth and adults alike commented how great it was that churches, especially youth groups, could come together to serve others. Our presbytery's Youth Council will begin plans for another mission day in late spring.

Participating churches in November were: First PC Angleton; Heritage PC, Houston; Webster PC;



Pinecrest PC, Houston; Pines PC, Houston; St. Thomas PC, Houston; Grace PC, Houston; Atascocita PC; San Pablo+Trinity PC, Houston; ChristChurch PC, Bellaire; Pathways PC, Houston; St. Philip PC, Houston; and Juan Marcos PC, Houston.



## Mission Trips for Youth

Want to team up with other youth groups and go on a mission trip this summer? Contact Caressa at the Presbytery Office to get connected!  
[cmurray@pbyofnewcovenant.org](mailto:cmurray@pbyofnewcovenant.org)

**Dates:** June and July

**Ages:** Middle and High School youth

**Possible destinations:** Austin, New Orleans, Dallas, San Antonio

## 2014 Presbytery Meetings and GA Meeting

**Saturday, March 22** - Korean Central PC, Houston

**June 14-21** - General Assembly of the PC(USA), Detroit, Michigan

**Saturday, July 19** - Covenant PC, College Station

**Saturday, November 8** - Indian PC, Livingston



The next **Connections** copy deadline is Wednesday, February 5, for the March/April issue. Please send articles and photos to Helen Wolf at any time at [hwolf@pbyofnewcovenant.org](mailto:hwolf@pbyofnewcovenant.org).

# Mission &

## From the Darkness to the Light

By Rev. Eid Abdelmassih Hanna, Hope International Center of Houston

How powerful is the gospel! The good news of Jesus can transform our life from darkness to the light, like it has for Farhad. Farhad is an Iranian refugee living in Houston; he was



Eid and Farhad

born as a Muslim. Farhad was not sure that Islam provided him inner peace, so he was interested to know more about Christianity.

God opened his heart while he was in Iran. Since it was dangerous for Farhad to live in Iran because of his faith, he came to the USA as a refugee. No doubt, it was hard for him to start a new life in Houston. He began to look for a church.

While walking one day, he found Grace Presbyterian Church. He met with Rev. Chris French, the Evangelism and Outreach pastor there. Rev. French connected him with me. I found out that he was isolated and had no resources. We prayed together and I visited with him several

times. God blessed him with a good job.

One Sunday I worshipped with him at Grace PC and during the collection of the offering, I noticed that he put some money in the offering tray and some more in an envelope. After church was over, I asked him about that and he told me, "God has given me a good job and I want to return back some of what God has given me." I was fascinated when I heard him say that. Farhad has connected with my group, Hope International Center of Houston, and still goes to Grace Presbyterian to worship. I visit with him regularly to help him grow in Christ. God has changed his heart from darkness to the light of Jesus Christ. We thank God for Farhad, and we trust that God will bless his life to glorify Him.

Hope International Center of Houston is a recipient of a Mission Grant from the Synod of the Sun and is supported by the Presbytery of New Covenant and its congregations.

## Congruent Incongruence: the Ministry of Hospice

As the hospice patients move from fear to an acceptance and peace, they exhibit a spirit of ironic appearance—to live with their dying. The term congruent incongruence may be oddly descriptive. Initially patients are often afraid and unaccepting of the terminal diagnosis. "God will work a miracle!" Though unaccepting, we learn that they want very much to experience acceptance from others. This is the importance of life review—*Look at my life; tell me I am okay with God*. And with the pastor, the patient will ask for spiritual direction. Yet, what they really want is to teach you what their experience, their life, has taught them.

The pastor is often the student when these life lessons are exhibited,

if not actually spoken. Hearing the life review and the regrets and the joys is necessary in order to offer them acceptance as they are, in order to offer them *Grace*, the primary medication the pastor carries in his or her spiritual medicine bag.

At Lunch and Learn at the presbytery Center on Tuesday, January 14, noon to 1:00 p.m. Presbyterian Hospice Chaplains - Bob Coberly, Jon Guyton, and Jim Mayer - will offer a few stories from their ministry with hospice patients and their families. The dialogue that follows will help the participants to understand this special ministry in a personal way. All are invited to this discussion. Bring your lunch!



# Ministry

## Alvin Presbyterian sets date to kickoff Alzheimer's Ministry

Pastor Craig King of First Presbyterian in Alvin, first heard about The Gathering Place more than a year ago. Knowing that there are many families in the Alvin area, an Alvin advocate was hoping to find a congregational host for a Gathering, a 4-hour social for persons with Alzheimer's disease and providing their caregivers a break. While there, participants play games, make crafts, sing and dance, and reminisce. They have a lot of fun, and their caregivers say they are much easier to care for because of the stimulation and affection they receive.

First PC, Alvin, will hold its first Gathering Place meeting February 12, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. They are actively recruiting volunteers to participate in this ministry. "As a pastor, I learned that being a caregiver to those who suffer from dementia is hard work. When I read the appropriately named book, *The 36 Hour Day*, my feelings were confirmed. Caregivers need to take good care of themselves for their own benefit, as well as for the good of the person for whom they are caring."

New volunteers of any

age may choose one of two dates - Tuesday, January 7 or Wednesday, January 22 - to attend a training and orientation class. Classes will be held at the church (302 S. Johnson St.) from 10:00 a.m., until 1:30 p.m. For more information, call the church office at 281-585-3406 or Brenda Maust at 979-849-5051.



Ten monthly Gatherings are hosted by different congregations in southern Brazoria County, providing 40 hours of free respite to caregivers. Funds are raised through a Community Development Block Grant, regional grants, and fundraisers. The goal of the Gathering Place Interfaith Ministries is to maintain family members in their homes and to help congregations build their outreach ministries. Leaders of such groups have discovered that the person with Alzheimer's is not only less agitated and frustrated when attending Gatherings, but studies indicate that their type of programming may actually slow the progression of the disease.

## BOOK REVIEW

### **The Unnamed Touched by the Galilean** by B. Jay Cannon

Retired New Covenant pastor Cannon brings the gift of holy imagination to the printed page in this novel inspired by "what might have happened next" wonderings about a cast of characters unnamed in scripture who were healed by Jesus. Set in Galilee in 42 AD, we meet again characters such as the Samaritan woman at the Well, the man with the withered arm, the invalid at Jerusalem's Sheep's Gate pool, the Gerasene Demoniac, the Centurion's servant and others. Not only do we hear each character reflect on the life-changing impact of their brief meetings with Jesus, but we get a glimpse of life in the early church, including conflict with the established Jewish authorities. As part one draws to a close the stories of these now interrelated followers of the way come into sharp focus. In part two, a murder mystery unfolds, exposing the fears and tensions that this emerging faith community creates among those desperate to hang onto the status quo.



## Pastoral notes

- **TE Mark Plunkett** is serving Heritage PC, Houston as Pastor (previously Transitional Pastor).
- **TE Brian Wiggins** is now serving as Pastor of First PC, Lufkin (previously Designated Pastor).
- **TE Judy Liljestrand**, HR, has transferred to Mission Presbytery.
- **TE Sally Wright** is serving as Chaplain at the Heart Hospital of Austin in Mission Presbytery.
- **TE Victor Harris** is now serving as pastor of Heritage PC in Carol Stream, IL.
- **TE Becky Downs** is serving as Pastor of John Knox PC, Houston (previously Designated Pastor).
- **TE Jon Guyton** is serving as Designated Pastor at Pinecrest PC, Houston.
- **TE Tom Sharon** is serving as Chaplain with Harris Health System.
- **TE Victor Dindot** is serving as Parish Associate at First PC, Navasota.
- **TE Belinda Koenig** (HR) is serving as Parish Associate at Pines PC, Houston.
- **TE Mark L. Cooper** (HR) is now a member of Tres Rios Presbytery.
- **TE Linda Herron** has been granted Honorably Retired status.
- **TE David Augustus** is serving as Associate Pastor at St. Andrews-Covenant PC in Wilmington, NC.
- **Shelley Homeyer**, First PC, Houston, has been enrolled as a Candidate.
- **Enrolled as Inquirers:** Joshua Young, Clear Lake PC, Houston; Christyn Soland, Memorial Drive PC, Houston; and Allison Purves, Atastocita PC

## Mission story of life and energy

La Iglesia Presbiteri Mexicana (Memorial) of San Marcos began a program one year ago to do ministry and outreach to the 15,000 plus Mexican American students at Texas State University, which is a few blocks from the church. There are now 75 students attending events, all church retreats and leading our youth program. One group has been given use of one of the church's unused buildings and they meet there on a regular weekly basis for Bible study and other activities. The Synod grant helps firmly establish the program.

A group of 35 young Mexican American women students at Texas State are meeting monthly with the Women of Memorial Presbyterian Church to discuss their faith journeys. The mostly Hispanic Phi Beta Chi sorority attends church as a group monthly and many come on other Sundays. Two young women are now leading the growing youth group. In addition, a growing group from other

places in the University has been attending. Three members of a team from the Anthropology department has done a study of the history, life and work of the congregation and it will be included in a large study of Mexican American Culture in San Marcos.

Members of the congregation were recently on campus as special older

guests for a small concert by three recent winners of the Tejano Music Awards. In November, a group of the young Mexican American women planned and carried out a "Fall Festival Fiesta" for the whole congregation. There is lots of life and energy in the congregation right now.

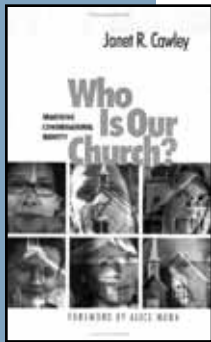
La Iglesia Presbiteri Mexicana (Memorial) of San Marcos is in Mission Presbytery and is a recipient of a Synod of the Sun mission grant for this campus outreach ministry.



Lots of life and energy!

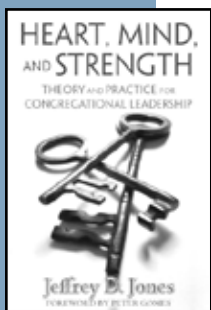
# In the Resource Center

## New Book Resources



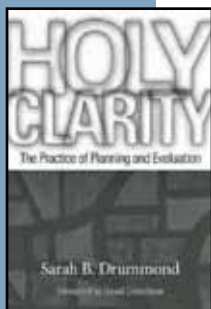
### **Who is Our Church: Imagining Congregational Identity** by Janet R. Cawley

After congregations have considered their history, added up all the statistics, and tried to be honest about their core values, the question still remains: “Who are we, really?” Cawley demonstrates how to use a congregation’s knowledge of itself to construct a metaphor of the congregation as a person and then draw on that metaphor to generate options for future mission. Having a clear, well-articulated congregational identity allows members to know, accept, and love who they are. It allows them to be flexible and respond to change and new initiatives from the Holy Spirit with boldness because their basic sense of themselves is affirmed rather than threatened. They can make faithful and appropriate choices about what they should do. Congregations will find this intuitive, imaginative approach is useful, accurate, and lots of fun!



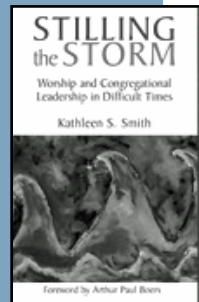
### **Heart, Mind and Strength: Theory and Practice for Congregational Leadership** by Jeffrey Jones

Leadership, observes the author, is never about you. What happens to you as a leader stems from a vast array of issues and dynamics over which you have little or no control. But leadership is also always about you—Christ’s disciple, part of the system, an individual with your own anxieties and a personal life that shapes both your personhood and your relationships. This book is about dealing with the tension between these two realities. It shares both theoretical and practical insights that will inform the “what” and influence the “who” of your leadership in transformative ways. Organized around the daily practices of leadership, it treats leadership as both a skill and an art. *Heart, Mind, and Strength* will enhance your practice of ministry by providing well-grounded theory related to the practical concerns you encounter in the daily work of balancing what you know with who you are.



### **Holy Clarity: The Practice of Planning and Evaluation** by Sarah B. Drummond

The most basic reason leaders of religious organizations conduct evaluations should be to find and create God-pleasing clarity regarding the organization’s purpose and the impact of its activities. Effective leaders evaluate because they need to know what is happening in their organizations and how those activities are effecting change. Four approaches to evaluation are offered that can help a leader to guide a community toward greater clarity, both when evaluating or analyzing programs and when planning and starting programs.



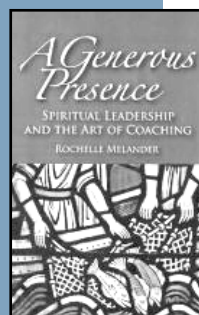
### **Stilling the Storm: Worship and Congregational Leadership in Difficult Times** by Kathleen Smith

When congregations go through difficult times, worship will both reflect and influence those difficulties. The practice of worship itself can be a key part of the congregation’s healing process. Specifically addressed are the difficulties arising from times of crisis, transition, and conflict. Basic principles of worship and the ways that unique moments and regular habits of worship shape the congregation are explored. Important themes for congregations and their worship planners to wrestle with relating to each of these types of difficulties are addressed.



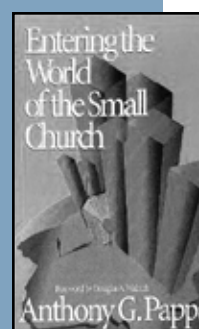
### **Your Brain Goes to Church: Neuroscience and Congregational Life** by Bob Sitze

Weaving together clear, accessible explanations about the workings of the human brain Sitze shows how a congregation’s identity and behaviors are shaped by the work of individual members’ brains as well as by the “collected brain” of the congregation. Tough questions are explored, such as: What’s the difference between “I believe” and “I know”? How do belief and knowledge show up in your congregation? Where is God in these brain activities? What does the brain’s growth and development mean for congregations? How do we learn, and what is memory about—and how can congregations be more brain-friendly?



### **A Generous Presence: Spiritual Leadership and the Art of Coaching** by Rochelle Melander

This book describes the philosophy, tools, and work of coaching and is designed to support all spiritual leaders in deepening and enriching their personal and professional relationships. It provides coaching tools that help spiritual leaders be better equipped to guide those they work with toward accepting the past, creating a life vision, and setting goals for the future. Leaders can also learn how to better understand themselves and strengthen their definitions for healthy living, raise their awareness about their own life and relationship skills, and improve their skills in relating to individuals and groups.



### **Entering the World of the Small Church** by Anthony G. Pappas

What does ministering in small churches require? Leaders who are willing to enter into that world with wholehearted, unconditional love for their congregations. Grounded in proven principles, rich with anecdotes from real-life situations, and brimming with practical strategies, this is a fresh “must-read” for every small church pastor.



# Transitions

## Welcome to New Covenant!

**TE Melissa Krabbe**, who completed her ordination exams at the last presbytery meeting, is serving as pastor at Westminster PC, Galveston. Melissa worked at the church as a Ministry Associate until her ordination. She was ordained and installed November 16. Melissa received her MDiv from Erskine Seminary in South Carolina.



Melissa Krabbe

One of Melissa's pastimes is finding Biblical parallels reflected in the plots and themes of literature, movies, and television (yes, she's an English major!). Melissa and her husband Rob have two young adult daughters, who are living in South Carolina, and their son Tristan, age 16, who moved with them to Galveston.

**TE Paul Hooker**, who transferred from Presbytery of St. Augustine where he was Executive Presbyter and Stated Clerk for the presbytery in Jacksonville, Florida, is serving on the faculty of Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary and is the Director of Ministerial Formation and Advanced Studies. His special interest in ministry, he reports, is Ecclesiology & Polity and Biblical Studies. Paul served on the Form of Government Task Force & Advisory Committee on the Constitution and has been a commissioner at two General Assemblies – in 1996 and 2000.



Paul Hooker

Paul received his DMin from Union Theological Seminary in Virginia and a PhD in Old Testament from Emory University in Atlanta, GA. He has served congregations in Georgia and Tennessee. Paul and his wife Pat have two married adult children, three grandchildren, and their dog Calder.

**TE Shelley Craig (HR)**, transferring from Northern Kansas Presbytery, explains that coming to New Covenant is a really a homecoming for her. While attending Woodlands Community PC, she came under care in New Covenant as a Candidate. Shelley received her BA from Vanderbilt University, an MA from Peabody College in Massachusetts, and her MDiv from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. Shelley has served churches in Muncie, IN, and Topeka, KA. She is now retired and "back home."



Shelley Craig

**TE Howard Edington** is currently serving as Interim Pastor at Memorial Drive Presbyterian, Houston. Howard received his MDiv from Louisville Presbyterian Seminary. Howard's pastoral journey began in Mobile, Alabama; from there he served as senior pastor in Texas, South Carolina, Arkansas, Florida, South Carolina, and New York City.



Howard Edington

Howard retired from First PC, Orlando, FL, after serving there for two decades. Following his retirement, Howard served Providence PC in Hilton Head Island, SC, and later as Preacher-in-Residence at Central PC in New York City. Howard and his wife, Trisha, have two adult daughters and three grandchildren.

**TE Chelsea Chiu** (Chiung-yuan Chiu) has been called to serve as pastor of Grace Taiwan PC, Houston, effective 2/1/14. She is transferring from the Presbyterian Church Taiwan. She earned her MDiv from Tainan Theological Seminary and her DMin from Taiwan Theological Seminary. Chelsea has the distinction of being the first transferring pastor to be examined using Skype on the large screen monitor at the Presbytery Center!

## Honorably Retired!

At the November presbytery meeting, TE Pamela A. Morgan was granted Honorably Retired status, effective Jan. 1, 2014. Pam addressed the presbytery with an amusing recitation of how "You know you are old enough to retire when..." After presenting a certificate and gift to Pam, Mike Cole prayed and gave thanks for Pam, who was surrounded by her supporters from throughout the presbytery.



Pam Morgan

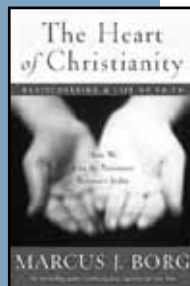
Pam attended Louisville Presbyterian Seminary, was ordained at MDPC, and earned a PhD in Educational Psychology at University of Houston. Pam served as Director of Therapy and Pastoral Care for Women's Home (a halfway house in Houston); Parish Associate at St. Philip PC; Pastor of Indian PC in Livingston, and Interim Pastor for a number of New Covenant churches, including St. Luke's PC, Houston, and Trinity PC in Port Neches. Pam was also the Dean of TIPS (The Institute for Pastoral Studies/Houston). Teaching, writing, and technology have been special passions in Pam's life. In retirement Pam plans to continue her webmaster work and enjoy her pets and their antics.



DVD

### The Change that Changes Everything: Lifestyle Based Spirituality

Author and spiritual director Fr. Richard Rohr offers four provocative lectures on lifestyle grounded spirituality. Rohr challenges listeners to transcend our "normal" way of viewing and labeling people and the world. Instead he helps viewers walk with integrity through the ambiguities of life. Topics include How we see and why we don't see; Contemplation as an Alternative Consciousness; The Rediscovery of Seeing; and Implications for Religion, Relationships and Politics.



DVD

### The Heart of Christianity

Author and speaker Marcus Borg speaks on four topics at the heart of Christianity based on his book of the same name in these videotaped lectures presented at Millsaps College. Topics include: Seeing the Foundations Again: Bible and Tradition; Seeing Faith Again: Not Belief but Relationship; Transformation: Born Again and Dying and Rising; and Social Transformation: The Kingdom of God, and Jesus as Lord. Each 55 - 65 minute lecture is followed by questions and answers. The DVD would probably be best used breaking the lectures into shorter chunks, followed by in class discussion. A discussion guide circulates with the DVDs.

2014

**January 4**

Young Adult Ministry Kick-Off  
Houston Food Bank

**January 14**

Congruent Incongruence  
Presbytery Center

**January 16**

Fresh Elastic for Stretched-Out  
Educators  
Presbytery Center

**January 25**

Church Officer Enrichment  
Northwoods PC  
Houston

**February 1**

Presbytery Youth Workers  
Southminster PC  
Missouri City

**February 21-23****February 28-March 2**

Youth Conclaves  
Cho-Yeh Camp & Conference  
Center  
Livingston

**March 22**

Presbytery Meeting  
Korean Central PC  
Houston

**June 14-21**

General Assembly  
Detroit, Michigan

**June – July-August**

Peru Mission Trips

**July 19**

Presbytery Meeting  
Covenant PC  
College Station

**July 21-26**

Synod Youth Workshop  
University of Tulsa

**November 8**

Presbytery Meeting  
Indian PC  
Livingston

JANUARY 4



Young adults, ages 18–25, are invited to a day of mission and fellowship Saturday, January 4. We will sort and package donated items at the Houston Food Bank from 1:00–4:00 p.m. and then stick around for dinner out afterwards. (Each person pays for his/her own dinner.)

Connect with other Presbyterian young adults in our presbytery and reunite with friends made through PYCC and other youth events! Contact Caressa Murray at 281-798-5993 or [cmurray@pbyofnewcovenant.org](mailto:cmurray@pbyofnewcovenant.org), if you are interested in attending. Spread the word and invite young adults from your church!

JANUARY 9-10



## Learn about our new Presbyterian Hymnal!

The new Presbyterian hymnal, *Glory to God*, was published in September. Six national celebrations are being held to prepare people to use this new resource. One of these events is being held at First PC, Ft. Worth, on January 9-10. Pastors, musicians, educators, and members are invited to attend. Registration for the Ft. Worth event closes Thursday, January 2. A small number of walk-up registrations will be accepted.

Don Saliers and Laura Mendenhall will join the members of the Presbyterian Committee on Congregational Song (PCOCS) and Hymnal Project staff as presenters. Focus topics will include global music, how to teach a new hymn, the theology behind the notes, liturgy in *Glory to God*, and much more! The \$35 registration fee includes two meals, a pew edition of *Glory to God*, and much more. Register online today: [www.presbyterianhymnal.org/launch](http://www.presbyterianhymnal.org/launch). Mark your calendars now for this important introduction!

JANUARY 16



## Fresh Elastic for Stretched-Out Educators

Start your new year out right by connecting with others involved in education and discipleship in this presbytery at “Fresh Elastic for Stretched-Out Educators” Thursday, January 16, 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. at the Presbytery Center. As we prepare for the Lenten season, we will continue to address what those involved in educational ministries in the church are saying they want. This time around we will look at Cross Generational Faith Formation in Christian Education.

- How to address the four keys of a vibrant faith - Caring Conversations, Devotions, Service, Rituals and Traditions - in Christian Education.
- Brainstorm ideas, both new and tried & true, on how to address the four keys in the Season of Lent. (Please bring ideas to share.)
- Meditations and prayers for the Season, both for personal refreshment and to share with your congregation.

If you are a volunteer, paid staff person, teaching elder or just curious, you are invited! Lunch, complete with a beverage and dessert, will be served. This event will be facilitated by folks with a seasoned heart for education. Please feel free to contact any one of them if you have questions.

Jo Ann Currie ([jscurrie51@yahoo.com](mailto:jscurrie51@yahoo.com)),  
Connie Nyquist ([lnyquist@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lnyquist@sbcglobal.net))  
Kim Shrull ([kshrull@earthlink.net](mailto:kshrull@earthlink.net))  
Anne Wilson ([anne.aiko.wilson@gmail.com](mailto:anne.aiko.wilson@gmail.com))

Your RSVP will assist planning. Please send replies to [anne.aiko.wilson@gmail.com](mailto:anne.aiko.wilson@gmail.com) by Monday morning, January 13.



# more events and gatherings to enjoy!

FEBRUARY 1

## Youth Workers Unite!



Fourteen youth workers and pastors congregated at the Presbytery Center one Saturday in November to meet one another, share resources, and discuss what youth workers of our presbytery need in order to serve their students and churches. As Youth Workers doing ministry alongside one another, they aspire to cultivate a colleague group that will focus on and give opportunity for connecting, sharing, resourcing, learning, and inspiring and encouraging one another.

The next gathering will be Saturday, February 1, at Southminster PC in Missouri City, 12:00 – 2:00 p.m. All paid staff and volunteer Youth Workers are welcome! Contact Caressa Murray for more information: [cmurray@pbyofnewcovenant.org](mailto:cmurray@pbyofnewcovenant.org).

*"Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing...respect those who labor among you...esteem them very highly in love because of their work." 1 Thessalonians 5:11-16*

FEBRUARY 21-23 AND FEBRUARY 28 - MARCH 2

## Deadline nears to register for Youth Conclaves 2014

Deadline to register for this year's Youth Conclaves is Monday, January 13! Be part of these fun faith-filled retreat weekends at Cho-Yeh Camp & Conference Center for Presbyterian middle and high school youth and adult advisors (21 and older; ratio one adult to five youth)

Cost: \$130/person (includes lodging, meals, a Christian concert and conference t-shirt)

Registration Packet available at <http://www.pby.ikaju.com/test/files/forms/2014ConclavesRegistrationPacket.pdf>  
Register online at <http://www.cho-yeh.org/texas-retreats/conclaves>



FEBRUARY 23-25

## Deurr Lecture Series 2014

Mark your calendar and plan to attend the Duerr Lecture Series at St. Philip PC, Houston, February 23, 24 and 25 at 7:00 p.m. each evening. Speaker for the 17th annual Duerr Lecture Series will be Dr. Johanna W. H. van Wijk-Bos, Dora E. Pierce Professor of Bible and Professor of Old Testament, Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. Dr. Bos says that while the Psalms are on the one hand dear to Christian tradition and experience, they can also appear remote and alien, in the raw quality of expressions of doubt and despair, the pervasive presence of enemies and some fervent demands for vengeance on the enemy. Her lectures, "Listening to Prayer - Israel's Psalms in Christian Experience," will help us regain access to precious, yet sometimes difficult, biblical material and tap into the rich treasure of prayers of the faithful across the centuries. Dr. Bos will also preach at the Sunday morning worship services (8:30 and 11:00).



Johanna Bos

All lectures are free and open to everyone. Child care is available for all ages for each lecture by calling the church office, 713 622-4807. [www.saintphilip.net](http://www.saintphilip.net)

Dr. Bos will preach at the Sunday morning worship services (8:30 and 11:00) and present lectures each evening at 7:00.

MARCH 28-30

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF PASADENA PRESENTS

Gospel-filled Ghost Ranch Weekend comes to Texas!

## GOSPELMUSIC Workshop

### SAVE THE DATE!

Gospel Music Workshop, led by pastors Todd and Linda O'Neal, will be presented at First PC, Pasadena, 4647 Preston. Friday, March 28 – Sunday, March 30. This is a free event.

We **read** the gospel,  
we **live** the gospel,  
now let's **sing** the gospel!

Let's fill the Lord's house with God's love!



Ellen Maxwell with Pastors Todd and Linda O'Neal

# *In Our Prayers*

TE Scott Harbison, St. Luke's PC, Houston, and family – Scott's father, Billy Harbison, died October 22, 2013, in Greenville, MS.

TEs Tom and Linda Sharon (Chaplains) and family – Tom's father, Percy Sharon, died November 8, 2013.

TE Melissa Krabbe – Melissa was ordained and installed November 16, 2013 as Pastor at Westminster PC, Galveston.

TE Bob Coberly and family – Bob's mother, Thelma Coberly, died November 11, 2013. Bob is a Chaplain at VITAS Innovative Hospice Care in Houston.

Family and friends of the Rev. Jack Lancaster, Pastor Emeritus of First PC, Houston – Jack died November 24, 2013.

Family and friends RE Glen Raymond Fry – Glen died November 30, 2013. Glen was a charter member of New Hope PC, Katy, and served on committees of the presbytery and the synod. His daughter, Lynda Haulenbeek, is a member of First PC, Houston.

RE John Jo, Korean Central PC, Houston – John was installed December 1, 2013, as Moderator of New Covenant Presbytery for 2014.

\*HR = Honorably Retired \*RE = Ruling Elder



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